

The IDVA Update

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Governor Joe Kernan addressing the Conference on
Tuesday, 8 June 2004

IDVA Annual Conference

The highlight of the 59th Annual Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs County Veterans Service Officers training conference was a visit from Indiana's veteran-in-chief, Governor Joe Kernan.

The Governor came to personally thank the County Veterans Service Officers for their continued service to their fellow veterans and our State.

The Conference was a success. The panel discussion on Wednesday afternoon was particularly well received and will be incorporated into the plans in the future.

Thanks to all who participated - the service organizations for their continued support, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home, and the Indiana Veterans' Home for giving us their time and energy, and also to Melissa Henson from the Department of Local Government Finance for her always outstanding presentation on the tax deduction for disabled veterans, and to Delta Dental group for their fine presentation of the Tricare Dental Care program.



Governor Kernan stops to greet outgoing Indiana County Veterans Service Officer Association President Tom Applegate of Huntington County

As always, the first question after the Conference is “where are we going next year”?

The Cares Commission in Indiana

There has been great and justifiable concern in the State over the recommendations of the Cares Commission.

The Cares report calls for the creation of 4 new community-based clinics, including one in Ft. Wayne, and transferring all of the inpatient care now done at Ft. Wayne to the Indianapolis VAMC and upgrading the Indianapolis facility. The plan also calls for contracting bed space for veterans in the Ft. Wayne area, but no procedure or policy has yet been established.

Implementation of the recommendations in the report is, except for construction projects, left up to the VISN. VISN 11 says as of yet they have no plan for implementation.

Governor Kernan has expressed his strong opposition to closing the Ft. Wayne hospital in a letter to Secretary Principi.

Rolling Thunder 2004



The Indiana chapters of Rolling Thunder mustered at Harley Davidson North on 96th Street in Indianapolis on the 27th of May for the annual Indiana to the Wall ride in support of all Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) from all wars. Rolling Thunder is dedicated to achieving a full accounting of POW's and MIA's.

Indiana Governor Joe Kernan, who was a Prisoner Of War in Vietnam, stopped by to lend his support to the men and women preparing to make the ride to Washington D.C.



Governor Joe Kernan in his Rolling Thunder colors presented by Rolling Thunder President Judy Brinkley and her husband Jon Brinkley.

This year the ride included Rolling Thunder members from all parts of the State of Indiana. 52 bikes left the parking lot at North Side Harley, and more Indiana riders joined them in Athens, Ohio. They all joined with the 400,000 Rolling Thunder motorcycles in the Pentagon south parking lot on Saturday morning.

Changes to Survivor Benefits for Spouses

DIC Benefits for remarried widows

USDVA PRESS RELEASE

The following pertains to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, was written by them, and is included purely for informational purposes.

Section 101: Retention of certain veterans' survivor benefits for surviving spouses remarrying after age 57. (Amends §§ 103(d)(2)(B), 1311 and 101(b))

Previously, 38 U.S.C. § 103(d) prohibited a surviving spouse who remarries from receiving DIC and related housing and educational benefits during the length of the remarriage. The Act now allows a surviving spouse who remarries on or after his or her 57th birthday to remain eligible for DIC, home loan, and educational benefits.

Surviving spouses who remarry after turning age 57 *prior* to the enactment of the Act have one year from the date of enactment of the Act to apply for reinstatement of benefits.

This amendment is effective January 1, 2004. Section 101(d) prohibits retroactive benefits. No benefit may be paid to any person by reason of the amendment for any period prior to the effective date.

For those survivors whose benefits were previously terminated due to remarriage on or after the age of 57, a claim for restored benefits must be submitted in writing. When such a claim is received, provide the survivor with VA Form 21-686c for completion. Also ask the survivor if his or her spouse is a veteran. If the spouse is a veteran, request that the survivor indicate the spouse's social security number or claim number and identify whether the spouse is receiving VA benefits. Cross reference folders as appropriate.

Survivors who remarry after reaching the age of 57 and who file claims for restoration of benefits prior to December 16, 2004, are entitled to benefits from January 1, 2004.

Survivors who remarry after reaching the age of 57 and whose claims for restored benefits are received on or after December 16, 2004, are not entitled to restoration of benefits.

When a current DIC recipient notifies USDVA of his or her remarriage, again provide the beneficiary with VA Form 21-686c for completion. Also ask the survivor if his or her spouse is a veteran. If the spouse is a veteran, request that the survivor indicate the spouse's social security number or claim number and identify whether the spouse is receiving VA benefits. Cross reference folders as appropriate.

USDVA will amend regulations to implement this new law. Pending publication of a final regulation, USDVA may award benefits at this time based upon the law and the instructions provided above.

National Cemetery Burial Locations Online

WASHINGTON – More than three million records showing where veterans have been buried in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries are now available online. The innovation will make it easy for anyone with Internet access to search for the gravesite locations of deceased family members and friends.

The nationwide grave locator contains more than three million records of veterans and dependents buried in VA's 120 cemeteries since the Civil War. It also has records of some burials in state veterans' cemeteries and burials in Arlington National Cemetery from 1999 to the present.

"This advance in service culminates years of effort by VA's national cemetery staff to put old paper records into this database," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "Making burial locations more accessible may bring more visitors to the honored resting places that we consider national shrines and historical treasures."

The Indiana Veterans' Memorial Cemetery

The records date to the establishment of the first national cemeteries during the Civil War. The Web site -- at www.cem.va.gov -- will be updated nightly with information on burials of the previous day.

The site displays the same information that visitors to national cemeteries find on kiosks or in written ledgers to locate gravesites: name, date of birth and death, period of military service, branch of service and rank if known, the cemetery's location and phone number, plus the grave's precise location in the cemetery.

The home page, "Burial and Memorial Benefits," allows the reader to select the Nationwide Gravesite Locator to begin a search.

State cemetery burial records are from those cemeteries that use VA's database to order government headstones and markers for veterans' graves. Since 1999 Arlington National Cemetery, operated by the Department of the Army, has used that database.

The information in the database comes from records of interment, which before 1994 were paper records kept at each cemetery. VA's interment records contain more information than what is shown on the Internet and cemetery kiosks. Some information, such as identification of the next of kin, will not be shown to the public for privacy reasons. Immediate family members with a government identification card may request to see the full record of a burial when they visit a national cemetery.

People wishing to receive e-mail from VA with the latest news releases and updated fact sheets can subscribe at the following Internet address:

http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/opalist_list_serv.cfm



The Indiana Veterans' Memorial Cemetery at Madison, Indiana, continues to improve the grounds, the facilities, and the services provided to our veterans and their families.

At this printing there are just over 200 veterans interred at the cemetery.



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